

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**BUDGET CONSULTATION 2015/16****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek a decision about the proposed methodology and approach for the 2015/2016 budget consultation.

Information and Advice

2. Budget consultation is a statutory requirement that aims to balance the various interests and needs of the council and its stakeholders, and to produce a soundly based financial plan for the future. It is imperative that anyone who lives, works or studies in Nottinghamshire is given the opportunity to be fully engaged in informing decisions about their local services. Consultation is undertaken to engage with and listen to as many local people as possible so that reliable and robust evidence can be provided to help the Council to make informed decisions on difficult and challenging issues.
3. Overall the consultation process aims to: raise awareness of the financial pressures of the Council and the limited resources available to fund the public services it provides; obtain views on outline as well as specific proposals; and potentially generate new and perhaps unanticipated budget saving ideas.
4. The consultation methodology is set out in **Appendix A**. The consultation programme will attempt to reach as many people as possible who work, train, educate, and or live in Nottinghamshire. The target audience will also include the community and voluntary sector, businesses and other key stakeholders.
5. The key theme proposed for the budget consultation is “Doing Things Differently”. This reflects the transformational approach of “Redefining Your Council” and outcomes from the subsequent service reviews. “Doings Things Differently” is the overarching term that encapsulates this new approach and will be displayed prominently on all materials and across all channels to help raise awareness.
6. The campaign will take place between the 8th October 2014 and 16th January 2015 (14 weeks). The table below shows the key activities and timescales.

| Activity | Timescale | |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| | Commence | Close |
| Stage 1 of the campaign: "Doing Things Differently" | 8 October 2014 | 16 January 2015 |
| Stage 2 of the campaign launches following approval by Policy Committee to consult on specific budget proposals | 12 November 2014 | 16 January 2015 |
| Reporting: | | |
| Consultation responses considered by members and Corporate Leadership Team with any changes considered | 1 December 2014 | 16 January 2015 |
| Finance & Property Committee - budget proposals considered | n/a | 9 February 2015 |
| Full Council – budget proposals approved | n/a | 26 February 2015 |

7. The first stage of the consultation will illustrate the current position of the Council, its need to 'do things differently' and illustrate some of the key approaches and models for different service provision. This will support understanding of the second stage which will consult on the specific proposals.
8. The first stage aims to seek resident views on the different approaches, to rate them in order of which ones they most favour and which they would like to see converted into actions. Results from stage one will then be analysed along with those from stage 2.
9. A consultation booklet containing background information and consultation postcards will be distributed to all the county's libraries and through other public buildings and organisations.
10. Artwork for the campaign incorporates the 'Nottinghamshire skyline' from last year's 'Budget Challenge' to support faster identification through recall. Complementing this is a new bold colour scheme with the 'Doing Things Differently' and 'Your Money Your Say' messages to provide its own identity and differentiate it from last year's campaign.
11. An extensive digital campaign utilising key channels including Internet/Intranet, Facebook, Twitter and email will be used to give the maximum level of exposure as well as the most opportunities to engage residents. This will add value to the budget consultation process by using the latest digital communications to share content and create debate whilst ensuring that all residents that do not have electronic and digital access can participate to the consultation with printed materials made available in their communities.
12. The Council has a specific statutory duty to consult with the Business Community regarding expenditure plans. This will be conducted through: the Business Engagement Group (which includes the Federation of Small Businesses and the Chamber of Commerce); Business Clubs, and the digital channels.
13. Members will be provided a briefing note with suggestions on how they can best support the consultation during its duration.

14. All consultation comments and/or questions received by the Council will be captured and responded to using an agreed approach. **Appendix B** shows the recommended 'Internal protocol for responding to correspondence'. This document has been successfully used in previous years and would be issued internally to all Councillors, Corporate Leadership Team and relevant officers.

15. The estimated cost of the budget consultation is £8,500. This is marginally below last year's cost, and will be met from the 2014/2015 Communications and Marketing budget.

Other Options Considered

16. Budget consultation is a statutory requirement

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

17. To satisfy the statutory requirement for the Council to carry out consultation on the budget proposals and to inform residents about the proposed approach.

Statutory and Policy Implications

18. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

19. The financial implications are as stated in paragraph 15.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) It is recommended that:
 - a) The outlined methodology for the 2015/16 budget consultation and associated timetable is approved
 - b) The attached internal protocol for dealing with correspondence associated with the consultation is adopted

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For any enquiries about this report please contact: Rajesh Sharma

Constitutional Comments (GR 232/09/14)

20. Pursuant to Part 3, Part A, Section 2 of the County Council's Constitution, the Policy Committee has the delegated authority to approve the recommendations contained within the report.

Financial Comments (NS 23/09/14)

21. The financial implications are as stated in paragraph 15.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All

Appendices

Appendix A – Consultation methodology

Appendix B – Internal protocol for responding to correspondence